

Public Culture: Museums and Collections Seminar Series 2009

The Research School of Humanities and the National Museum of Australia present the
Museums and Collections Seminar Series

Wednesday 4th March, 12.30-2.00, Old Canberra House, ANU

THE OBJECT OF AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL ART HISTORY

Dr Susan Lowish, Lecturer in Australian Art History, University of Melbourne

Increasing attempts are being made to reconfigure the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous art in Australian art historical scholarship and museum display. This seminar addresses the limits and possibilities of an Aboriginal art history; it considers how the processes and outcomes might differ from existing art historical practices. The seminar also looks at what information/resources exist and what still is needed, and debates the benefits for different parties. Either implicitly or explicitly, most publications on Aboriginal art have as their target audience a wider arts community. However, an unfortunate consequence of this situation is that communities are caught in a one-way dissemination of knowledge. Put simply, Indigenous communities tend always to be the source of information and rarely the recipients. Bringing knowledge back has the potential to increase the intellectual capital of these regions in ways that result in locally and culturally inspired economic development. The question of how to construct critical frameworks within which to discuss Aboriginal art history is linked to issues of cultural, commercial and intellectual property. What are the best ways to invigorate and expand Australian art history to account for Aboriginal art?

Dr Susan Lowish has been teaching the history of Australian Art at the University of Melbourne for the past 3 years. During that time she has also helped write and develop subjects on Indigenous art. She has published critical essays on existing Australian art history and is working on a book from her PhD, *Writing on Aboriginal Art 1802-1929: a critical and cultural analysis of the construction of a category*.

The Museums and Collections Seminar Series for 2009 is convened by Dr Kylie Message, Dr Sarah Scott and Dr Caroline Turner

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ALL WELCOME

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